



DISPLAYS NEWS

LIQUID CRYSTAL DOMINANCE

A presentation from the Society for Information Display highlighted the strength of the LCD market. It said the technology is in a near unassailable position. As new fabrication plants come online to feed the growing LCD TV market, the older plants are freed up to make lower-cost panels for PC and phone use.

The desktop PC monitor market has moved over almost entirely to LCD screens with 86 per cent of all sales in Europe. It will take until the end of the decade for the TV market to achieve these kind of levels.

NEXT-GENERATION CONSOLES HELP DRIVE HD SCREEN SALES

At the recent E3Expo in Los Angeles, Sony and Microsoft declared High Definition (HD) displays to be key to the next generation of games consoles. Microsoft described the upcoming console war as the "HD era" and promised 720p and 1080i support on all titles from its Xbox 360. Sony followed suit by announcing that the PS3 will have two HDMI outputs. This is good news for LCD and plasma screen manufacturers. The Xbox 360 will be on sale by the end of the year – the first true HD consumer device available in Europe.



REVIEW DLP PROJECTOR

BENQ PB2240

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £970 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.benq.co.uk

For the business person on the move, there are two key factors that influence their decision of which portable projector to buy: weight and brightness. The two are often linked, with lighter projectors lacking the brightness necessary to deal with lit rooms. This is a potential problem, as a presenter on the move is not in a position to choose the meeting room that's used.

The idea behind the PB2240 is to provide enough lumens to operate in a bright meeting room without weighing down the presenter excessively. Providing an impressive 2,000 lumens, the PB2240 definitely succeeds in image brightness.

The high-resolution 1,024x768 DLP uses a native 4:3 image ratio and is ideal for presentations with its 2,000:1 contrast ratio. Image quality is easily capable of dealing with the presentations it was built for, and some video use too. Our standard greyscale gradient and colour wheel tests were displayed competently, and both showed smooth transitions.

The zoom and focus controls are recessed on the top of the body as usual. They both feel solid without being stiff and are easy to adjust. Admittedly, the lens and zoom don't provide the biggest image that we've seen – offering a 2.67m diagonal image at a 3.5m distance – but they are still sufficient.



The unit feels well built with a solid plastic casing. It is very compact at only 238x86x180mm and weighs under 2kg. There are two IR inputs for the credit card-sized remote, though precise aiming is required to get a response from them. The top of the unit has full controls on it as well, with the menu system proving easy to navigate with all the usual controls. Inputs are limited to VGA, S-video and composite.

Lamp life is respectable for this brightness at 2,000 hours. Replacements cost around £250, which equates to 12.5p an hour. There is a 3,000-hour economy mode too, at a reduced brightness. The PB2240 provides lots of power for the presenter on the move, at a very reasonable price.

Seth Barton

✓ Compact; very bright

✗ Poor remote

SPECIFICATIONS 0.55" DLP, 1,024x768 resolution, 2,000 lumens, 2,000:1 contrast ratio. **Part code** 99.J9377.B91

HOTLIST 19" LCD MONITOR

SAMSUNG SM913N

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £235 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.uk

DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk



The SM913N's simple design and thin bezel are attractive and image quality is excellent, with impeccable focus and smooth linear greyscales. Colour accuracy is superb, with the ability to resolve subtle details in images. The SM913N has a low price along with excellent image quality and a pleasing design, and fully deserves our Best Buy Award.



SPECIFICATIONS 1,280x1,024 native resolution, D-sub input. **Part code** MJ19ESKSB

HOTLIST 17" LCD MONITOR

RELISYS TL795-RU

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £163 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.relisys.co.uk



The TL795-RU looks very smart and unobtrusive, with neat desk-level D-sub and DVI inputs. Image quality is well above average with exceptionally smooth greyscales and accurate colour reproduction. It isn't as bright as some LCDs, but this didn't concern us overly. There are no other weaknesses, making this the best monitor for a tight budget.



SPECIFICATIONS 1,280x1,024 native resolution, D-sub, DVI and line inputs, headphone out, speakers. **Part code** TL795-RU

HOTLIST 20" LCD MONITOR

ACER AL2021MS

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £456 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.acer.co.uk



Acer's AL2021MS is amazingly affordable for a 20" LCD. We were bowled over by its image quality: its white was bright and pure, focus was spot on and viewing angles were exceptionally good. Photos displayed subtle details and good skin tone accuracy. The 25ms response time made games look slightly sluggish, but such high quality at this price makes it perfect for photo editing.



SPECIFICATIONS 1,600x1,200 native resolution, D-sub and DVI inputs, speakers. **Part code** AL2021MS

REVIEW LCD TELEVISION

EVESHAM V30CLTT-A

RATING ★★

PRICE £699 inc VAT

SUPPLIER
www.lowestonweb.com
DETAILS www.evesham.com

Evesham is known mainly for its high-quality PC systems; now it is entering the fast-growing budget LCD TV market. This 30" model carries Evesham's badge but sadly it cannot fulfil the expectations of quality that go with it.

We tested the TV using a DVD player and a standard Freeview set-top box. There are two SCART inputs and a special lead that allows a progressive component signal to be fed through the VGA input. Using both devices and input types we found the screen disappointing. There was ghosting on lines of strong contrast and noise in areas of flat colour. The TV's electronics made a hash of converting and scaling the low-resolution analogue signals from these devices.

However, the screen performs well as a monitor, with its 15:9 screen ratio and 1,280x768 native resolution being ideal for use with a media centre PC. The standard greyscale gradient and colour wheel tests were both displayed competently. Using it this way bypasses the TV's image processing, instead using the PC to do the work of scaling the image and de-interlacing any interlaced footage.

Build quality is sturdy and the viewing angles are brilliant, which is essential for the average living



room. Screen size is large enough to draw you into movies. Unfortunately, the speakers are only average, with too much mid-range, a lack of bass and distortion at higher volumes. One other letdown is the selection of inputs; there is no DVI or dedicated component input, only the dual-purpose VGA.

It's a big screen at a great price and one worth considering if you plan to use it exclusively with a media centre PC. However, it is to be avoided if you need to use the SCART inputs, in which case, we'd recommend you consider the Acer AL2671W in our *Hotlist* below.

Seth Barton

✓ Very cheap for a 30" screen

✗ Limited inputs, poor picture

SPECIFICATIONS 30" image, 1,280x768 native resolution, D-sub, two SCART, S-video and RF inputs, two 10W speakers. **Part code** EV.M0107.009

HOTLIST LCD TV

ACER AL2671W

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £575 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.acer.com


The stylish look of a flat TV, but without all the expense or hassle of full home cinema kit;

plenty of inputs, including DVI, and a 1,280x768 resolution make the Acer ideal for upcoming HD content. Image quality is great for the price, and the excellent sound is provided by pseudo-surround speakers. Home cinema nuts should look elsewhere, but otherwise this is a real bargain.

SPECIFICATIONS 26" image, 1,280x768 native resolution, D-sub, DVI, two SCART and RF inputs, two 5W speakers. **Part code** EV.M0107.009


HOTLIST LCD PROJECTOR

PANASONIC PT-AE700

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £984 inc VAT and delivery

SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.uk
DETAILS www.panasonic.co.uk

The PT-AE700 is a home cinema projector and its native 16:9 widescreen ratio is ideal for DVD, gaming and digital TV. Every connector is provided including component, SCART and HDMI, so you can enjoy a wide range of media with excellent image clarity. It is also one of the quietest projectors we've used. Bulb life is up to 4,000 hours in low lamp mode, though this requires a fully darkened room.

SPECIFICATIONS Three 0.7" LCD, 1,280x720 resolution, 1,000 lumens, 2000:1 contrast ratio. **Part code** PTAE700EC



CHOOSING A... PROJECTOR

Follow our step-by-step guide to buying the perfect projector

1 Low-cost projectors make two main sacrifices. The brightness, measured in ANSI lumens, will be relatively low and the native resolution will be limited to 800x600. Neither need be serious drawbacks provided you can dim the lights or draw the blinds and there isn't a huge amount of detail in your slides. Home cinema certainly doesn't demand anything more. Movie buffs are likely to be more concerned with the lamp life and replacement cost.

2 Image quality is obviously important but hard to assess from specifications alone. A high contrast (over 500:1) ratio adds depth to a picture and is one tangible benefit of projectors based on digital light processing (DLP) rather than the older LCD technology. The quality of the optics and colour balance can't be gauged without consulting a review, though.

3 Consider where you'll be using your projector; size and weight are important if the unit will be moved around a lot. You should aim for under 3kg if portability is an issue. Small rooms demand a quiet (sub-33dB) projector and a flexible throw distance – this tells you how close or far away the screen can be. Most projectors can mirror or rotate their image to cope with ceiling mounting or rear projection.

4 Check that the projector can cope with all the signals you might want to feed it. Common video formats are supported by almost all projectors but high-resolution VGA signals aren't. Highly detailed slides will display at their best only on pricier projectors with a 1,024x768 native resolution.

5 Top-of-the-range projectors have 2,000 ANSI lumens brightness or more, to outshine brightly lit rooms, and a host of useful features to make presentations look and sound slicker – and make it easier for the presenter. Anti-theft features are also worth investigating.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE
(Recommended minimum in grey)

NATIVE RESOLUTION: 800x600

BRIGHTNESS: 1,100 ANSI Lumens

CONTRAST RATIO: 500:1

LAMP LIFE: 2,000 hours

CHECK: Weight, throw distance, noise